



AFRICAN UNION ELECTION OBSERVER MISSION TO THE 29TH MARCH 2012 NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

ARRIVAL STATEMENT

1. In response to the invitation of the Independent Electoral Commission of Gambia (IEC), H. E. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, has dispatched an Observer Mission to The Gambia to observe the National Assembly elections, which will be conducted on the 29th of March, 2012.
2. The AU Observer Mission is led by Dr. Samuel Azu'u Fonkam, President, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). The Mission is composed of twenty-two (22) members drawn from Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), National Parliaments, the Pan African Parliament, African Ambassadors Accredited to the African Union in Addis Ababa, eminent personalities and members of civil society organizations from various African countries.
3. The Mission Observers are drawn from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Saharawi Republic, Somalia, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe,
4. The Mission is assisted by a team of technical staff from the African Union Commission, the Secretariat of the Pan-African Parliament and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) based in South Africa.
5. The AU Observer Mission arrived in The Gambia on the 22nd of March 2012 and will remain in the country until the 4th of April 2012.
6. The purpose of the Mission is to make an objective, independent and impartial observation of the National Assembly elections.

7. Guided by the Durban Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa as adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in July 2002 (AHG/Decl.1 (XXXVIII)); the Mission is expected to:
 - i. determine whether the National Assembly elections are conducted in accordance with the country's constitution, electoral laws, other appropriate laws and the guidelines governing the conduct of elections-
 - ii. determine whether the election environment is conducive for voters to participate and exercise their fundamental rights;
 - iii. establish whether the participating political parties, agencies and groups are satisfied with the preparations for and conduct of the elections;
 - iv. evaluate the level of voters' awareness and whether the voters' right to choose freely and in secrecy are guaranteed, upheld and protected;
 - v. identify and record electoral malpractices, if any;
 - vi. assess whether the media coverage and conduct are in conformity with the laid down rules and guidelines;
 - vii. evaluate transparency and adequacy of the voting, counting and collation processes; as well as the announcement of the results; and
 - viii. establish whether the results of the elections are a true reflection of the democratically expressed will of the people of The Gambia.
8. Members of the AU Mission will be deployed throughout The Gambia ahead of the voting day in order to assess the manner in which the people of The Gambia are participating in the current electoral process and the environment in which they will exercise their democratic right.
9. A preliminary statement outlining the African Union observer Mission's general assessment and observations on the process will be issued at a press conference to be held by the AU Observer Mission prior to its departure from the country.
10. The full report of the AU Observer Mission on the 2012 National Assembly elections will be presented to the Authorities of the Government of The Gambia through the office of the African Union Commission Chairperson.

11. For further information, kindly contact the AU Mission Secretariat based at the Sheraton Hotels, Banjul, The Gambia through the following numbers: Shumbana Karume (mission coordinator): 7218808 and Matias Matondo: 7365283

Banjul 25 March, 2012